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The Bard of the Bakery

By BAILEY MILLARD.

"The other night, while raining hard,
I wa'ked along the street.

"Now, what rhymes with 'hard?' Card, lard, regard, bard—yes, bard.

"I was but a poor old bard,
Who walked with limping feet.

"No, 'walked' will never do. I used it in that second line. Better make it 'strode along the street' in that line. Wonder if they'll send this back, like they did all the rest. Well, I can't help writing, and they'll want all they can git of my poetry by 'n' by. It's in me, anyways, an' it's jest got to come out."

Old Massey had begun his eighth poem for the week. Verse came very easy to him. He had a natural gift for it, so all the folk along Mission street said, and he believed in himself. Byron was never prouder of his verse than was Royal Massey of his wonderful quatrains. He always wrote in quatrains. Couplets he despised.

The bell over the front door of the bakery jingled.

"Simsie, go'n see what's wanted," called the poet.

Simsie, girlish, eleven and lightsome, pushed aside the wrinkled portiere and went into the shop. Soon she tripped back and chirped:

"It's a gen'l'man, ah, awfully stylish; an' he wants to see you, pop. He don't want to buy nothin'—jus' wants to see you."

"Show him in," said the poet, in a voice loud enough to be distinctly caught by the caller. What the caller did not catch was the magnificent wave of the hand that accompanied the command.

Bruce Poston, the star reporter of the Herald, walked into the back room majestically. He was only twenty-six, but he had already seen all of life that was worth seeing, and, blase cynic that he was, the sight of the old poet, whose long gray hair hung down to his paper while he bent over the table and wrote, moved him not in the least.

"That old chap's head might make a good half-tone," was all that Massey suggested to him, at first sight. Bruce had expected the occupants of the room to be awed by him and his clothes. These "proletariats," as he wrote of them, were generally so impressed.

"I'm from the Herald," announced the star reporter.

"Have they, they have——" The old man's voice shook like a 'cello trill. "Have they ——?"

"Have they what?" asked Bruce.

"Have they sent you to say they've accepted my poem—the one on the 'rain?' They've got it, you know."

Now Bruce had come to 'write up' the old man as "The Bard of the Bakery." The Sunday editor had thought that he might have a good two-column story of him.

"Well, I may be able to use some of your poetry," said the reporter. He did not say how he would use it. He had thought to make a slashing good article on how the Bard of the Bakery wrote his verse. It was to be a very clever story, and there could be no end of fun in it. He had come to see the poet because he wanted to get material for a description of the place where he wrote, and he had thought he would talk freer there.

"You are engaged upon a poem now, aren't you?" asked Poston.

"Yes; I've got one verse wrote and the first line of the second. I think there'll be twelve altogether." The old man's voice continued to shake. He was tremendously excited. He felt that fame was coming at last.

"Oh, 'n he's got a whole box full of beautiful verses all written out. They're in the closet." It was Simsie who spoke. "Sit down 'n I'll git 'em for you. You can read 'em easy 'nough. I copied 'em all off for him."

She ran to get the box. It was a great green affair that had held three dozen fancy Easter eggs. She laid it on the table before Poston.

"That's good," said he. "But let's see what you're working on now. That ought to be the best, you know."

"P'raps. It's goin' to be about 'The Little Match Boy's Mother.' An' it's going to be very pathetic."

He passed the lines he had written to Poston, who read them with professional interest, which was quite another thing from the interest he felt bound to affect in the presence of the poet.

"'The other night, while raining hard, I passed along——' Good enough!" he said to himself. "There's a whole lot in the old man. He's no end of fun."

"Do you like the lines? Do they begin too pathetic all at once?" asked the bard.

"Oh, no—not a bit too pathetic," Poston replied. "Now," he thought, "I'll see the machinery run and hear it creak." He passed the paper back to Massey. "Just go ahead and write off the rest."

Although he trembled all over and his pen made strange, jerky movements, the poet went at the grind and the second quatrain was soon finished.

"Why," said Poston, who had to say something, "you've got a natural gift for poetry."

"That's what they all say," replied the old man, with a pride that was protrusive and eloquent. "That's what they all say—a nat'ral gift."

"I'll just look about a bit while you finish up the other ten stanzas," said Poston. He was anxious to get the descriptive stuff, the setting of the story, without which it would be no better than common reporter's work, which he abhorred.

"I'll show you the bakery," said Simsie, leading the way toward the front and into the shop. "Of course, we don't bake any bread ourselves. It comes in twicet a day, mornin' and afternoon, an' the cakes, an' snaps, an' doughnuts. Now, here's the showcase. The candy man comes every two weeks."

The showcase was a dull little affair, but it evidently seemed bright enough to Simsie.

"Sometimes it's a'mos' full," she asseverated, "but the school children come in to-day at noon an' bought nearly all the things we had. My, I was busy!"

"So you don't go to school?" was Poston's aimless query.

"Not now—did once. But I can write an' figger pretty good. I'm goin' again when pop makes a lot o' money writin' poetry. He said he would send me to high school some day, sure, an' I could have music lessons."

A little of the cynic fell through a crack in Poston's composition. Would this thing be so funny, after all?

"We keep all the pretty things, the fancy candy, the toys an' the pies in the window," said Simsie. "But you can't see 'em very well unless you step outside."

Poston followed her around to the front of the shop and looked through the window. There were three pies there, a few sugared things that Simsie called "Bollvars," some jujubes, a little tin wagon and a fly-specked horse, a cheap little doll that a mouse had gnawed, so that it was suffering severely from loss of sawdust, and a little china pig up to his knees in dusty beans that lay in a saucer. Above these hung a few faded signs, one of which read, "Simkin's Pies," and another, "Three Bread Tickets for 10 Cents."

Of a sudden an awful thought struck Simsie. What if she could not get the reporter back into the shop again? Then pop would lose the chance of selling his poetry. It was with much nervousness that she saw him look up and down the street, as if about to take his departure.

"You haven't seen all of it yet," she said, watching him very intently. "Won't you come in now?"

"No; I guess I'll take a smoke out here."

"Oh, you can smoke inside. Pop does. Come in."

The shop had seemed insufferably stuffy to Poston. He had thought of describing it as a "deoxygenated doughnutry." He lighted a cigarette and took a step or two up the street. Then he felt a small hand grasp his, and heard Simsie's appeal,—

"Oh, please come back, won't you? Don't go away?"

"I wasn't going away," he said, permitting himself to be led into the "doughnutry" again and feeling austere benignancy come over him in a gentle wave.

"Ah," he heard the voice of the poet saying, "Ah! The muses are with me strong to-day. Seems like I could write almost anything. Come in, young man, and listen to this."

Nothing of the condescension that lay three inches thick over the reporter's manner toward him was seen by the bard. He began to read the poem all over again, intoning and swelling the happiest lines with wonderful effect. The reading and the style of it decided Poston. He had been wavering for some reason or other. Now he was firm. It would make a rattling good story. Nothing of it should be left out. He felt sure the Sunday editor would be highly pleased.

"Now, when you publish this, young man," said the poet, "you want to be sure to get in all the lines. Don't you think that one that ends 'surcease of sorrow' is good? And where the little match boy's mother dies, ain't that affecting? I almost cried when I wrote it."

"Oh, it's so sad!" declared Simsie. "Don't you think so?" she asked of Poston.

"Oh, very!" was the reply. "Now let me make some selections from the box."

"How many are you goin' to print?" asked the bard.

"Can't say—perhaps six or eight of the best."

"Six or eight? That will be just grand!" said Simsie.

In taking the poems from the box Poston observed that many of them were in the envelopes in which they had been returned from magazine editors and newspaper folk. He mentioned the fact to the old man.

"Yes," he said, with a deep sigh. "I'll tell ye honestly, they've all been refused, some of 'em as much as twenty times. It takes a lot of postage stamps to keep 'em goin' the rounds. I was kind o' waitin' to git a little money before I sent 'em out again. This poetry writin' takes a heap of patience."

"Patience and postage," repeated Poston to himself. "That's a good subhead for my story."

He made two selections and the bard looked them over.

"I think," said the old man, "I'd take out 'Father's Lost His Job' and put in 'The Gas Is Burnin' Bright.' You don't want all sad pieces, do ye?"

"But they're the funniest—I mean the most fetching," said Poston. "Better put that in extra. That will make nine. If I don't want to print 'em all I can leave out 'Father's Lost His Job.'"

Simsie put the verses in a little paper bag she brought from behind the counter. Then Poston prepared to take his leave.

"I'm awful glad ye came," said the poet. "If the Hurruld prints these they'll want more, I s'pose. I'll write a good one to-night. I feel like I could allus write best after dark, anyway."

He swelled grandly. He knew that his fame and fortune were assured now.

Poston said "Good-bye!" and walked away. He had not reached the corner before Simsie again grasped his hand.

"Is it really so?" she asked. "You're not foolin'? Once a editor wrote and said he'd print one of the pieces, and we waited and waited, and it never come out. You ain't foolin', are you?"

Poston did not relish this. That hand pressed his with too much friendship for present purposes.

"No; I'll print 'em," he said, but he could not look down into Simsie's eyes when he made this promise.

"Oh, I thought you was all right," she explained. "I only wanted to make sure," and the pressure of the hand increased to one of perfect confidence and trust.

Poston began to hate himself. He did not give up the plan of printing his article and some of the worst instances of the poet's rank incompetency and unconscious humor, but he wished there were no child in the matter. He was not quite blase and cynical enough to keep this factor of it from pricking him.

"Good-bye," said Simsie. Then she ran back and threw a kiss at him, that seemed a benediction of the unworthy, and Poston got aboard his car.

At the office he did not seem to enthuse when he told the story to the Sunday editor.

"You can make a good thing out of that, Bruce. It's the best kind of fun, and you've got a bully chance for that descriptive genius of yours. I'll bet you are full of clever phrases at this moment."

But Poston was modest. He slightly deprecated the idea of the story, but he gave the editor the address of the Bard of the Bakery, that he might send a photographer out to get a picture of him.

"There's a girl out there," concluded Poston, "just a little thing. He might want to photograph her, too; but ask him to leave her out, will you, old chap? She don't come into the story at all."

The editor smiled. He felt there was some sentiment there, but he let the matter pass without reference.

Poston went to his desk, took from his pocket the paper bag, spread the poems before him and began to write. He threw away the first six sheets of his manuscript as it came off the pad, and then (for the atmosphere of his dingy box of a room had again taken hold upon him) he warmed up to his work. When he was about to pencil a paragraph, which was to be exceedingly humorous, making a very sarcastic allusion to "The Little Match Boy's Mother," the office boy came in and said there was somebody to see him.

"In a minute," said Poston, plunging into the paragraph. Soon the door opened and in glided Simsie.

"Here's another piece he wanted me to bring you. He wants 'The Broken-hearted Factory Girl' left out and this one put in instead. He wrote it since you left. It's beautiful. She sat down and began to read:

"If I was dying—dying,
And the night wind blowed about me,
I know you'd be crying—crying,
For you could not live without me."

There were nine other verses, and to Poston this piece seemed the gem of the collection. When he took it in his hand he wondered why he did not enthuse more over its possession.

"If he wants to put any more in he can, can't he?" asked Simsie. "He thinks you'll want a good many after this."

"Well, not for quite a while," said Poston, stroking his chin reflectively. He glanced down at the cheap little frock that Simsie wore, and the thought came to him that one week's cigars would keep her in clothes for a year.

"When will you pay for 'em?" she asked. "Not till after they come out, I suppose."

"Well, that's the usual thing." He had not thought of this matter of payment. Of course something was due to Old Massey, but how much or when it should be paid were not matters he had considered very deeply.

"He thought he could get enough out o' these verses to pay some o' the rent. It's away behind, but the man is awfully good to us. We don't make much out o' the shop, but now we've got a start on the paper with our poetry we ought to do pretty well, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes," temporized Poston.

Then Simsie ducked her head to make her highly effective bow and withdrew silently.

"Hang this job anyway!" growled Poston. He glanced at his neatly written manuscript, folded it fiercely and laid it away in his drawer. It was a week before he had the heart, or the lack of it, to take "Old Massey's roast," as he called it, out of the drawer, finish it up and hand it to the Sunday editor. He had to tell eight different and very ingenious lies to account for the holding back of the manuscript, and there were a few throbs of indecision as he handed it over.

The matter was set in type and the proof was sent down to Poston from the composing room. While he was reading it and felicitating himself sweetly upon some of his happy phrases Simsie came in and sat beside him.

"He got kind o' anxious, an' wanted to know if anything had happened. You know you had the poetry quite a long while—eight days."

"Yes, but how did you get in?"

"I told 'em outside I was a friend o' yours."

"Oh, well," said Poston, "the poetry's in type now, and it's going in next Sunday."

"Oh, it goes in the Sunday Hurruld? That'll be grand. We thought it 'ud come out 'most any day, an' we've been lookin' all over the paper, even among the 'vertisements."

She went out, and in a hour came back with two more poems.

"He thought that you'd want some ahead, so he's writin' a whole lot. These is both sad. He said you seemed to like the sad ones best. I believe he likes to write that kind."

"Oh, it doesn't matter. I don't know how many more we can print," said Poston, wondering what to say or do. Then he noticed a feeling of keen disappointment in the child's manner and expression. "Well," he said, "you'd better leave these any way."

She laid the manuscript upon the table and went away. As she walked out he noticed that her shoes were very ragged. Perhaps——

He ran out into the hallway and caught hold of Simsie's arm as she stood by the elevator.

"Look here," he said, handing her what loose change he had in his possession. "We want to pay this much on account. We'll pay the rest after the first poems are published."

The child's face turned pale with excitement, and her hands trembled as they closed about the money. She tried to say something, but failed. She glanced up at Poston, with eyes that pictured the fullness of her heart. She put the coins into her pocket and held her hand in it to keep them from falling out. She gave a little gasp as she got into the elevator, and then looked back at Poston, with a fixed stare, which the sudden dropping of her face and form from his sight broke abruptly.

Poston went back to his box and sat a long time looking out of the window over the roofs (for the Herald building was taller than any other in the neighborhood and the editorial rooms were on the fourteenth floor) and down at the people, who from that view of them sprawled their legs and spread out like four-footed animals, with no apparent height, their heads seeming close to the ground and their shoulders prodigiously large and out of proportion. He had what he called a snap assignment, which consisted of taking a "skate's" story and rewriting it—something that he was frequently called upon to do and which made him more lofty than was necessary. He had prided himself on the fact that no "skate" ever recognized a line of his own work after he had revamped it. But he was not thinking of the article that lay on his desk nor of anything besides Simsie and the Bard of the Bakery, and of the fact that his "roast" of Old Massey would be made up that evening and go to press as soon as the daily paper was run off. He looked along up Market street, past the Phelan statue, up to where the Lady of the Dome of the City Hall lifted her torch. It was evening and there was a world of pink in the sky beyond the Twin Peaks, for the sun had just gone down over the great gray Pacific, and the Lady on the Dome was standing out in dull black against the sky. To him, reflecting, she seemed the embodiment of Old Massey's dream of fame, and as she faded into the gathering darkness the dream seemed to blur out and lose itself in nothingness. What would Old Massey say when he read that article? What would Simsie say?

After dinner he went up into the composing room, where the Sunday editor's assistants were superintending the making up of the "magazine" forms. Two long rows of stout little tables that stood on wheels supported the forms, several of which had the appearance of being ready for the press. Some had a few stray picture blocks in them, and in others the bright, glinting linotype metal was being carefully placed by the printers. Yet with all the care the work did not go smoothly. Poston was accustomed to the scene, as he had directed the making up of Sunday pages on occasion. The two assistants were quarreling with each other about the disposition of a large cut which should or should not have been reduced or enlarged to a certain size, and their angry voices rose above the whirr and click of the long rows of typesetting machines that ran down the middle of the composing room.

Poston, leaning over one of the forms, saw a halftone cut with a proof lying beside it. The proof was daubed with ink on its margin and was not an attractive thing to look upon, but it caught his eye, for out of the streaks of ink peered the picturesque face of Old Massey.

He stood looking at it while the makeup men jangled and finally stopped short when the Sunday editor came in and asked abruptly and with a significant air:

"Well, gentlemen, are you going to be all night getting these other forms made up? Where's the proof of that 'Most Astounding History of the Calaveras Mastodons?'"

"Here it is," said one of the assistants. "Did you order that Princess of Wales cut five or seven columns?"

"What have they made it?"

"Five."

"And I told 'em distinctly to make it four. What's the good of giving those chaps in the etching room any instructions? They are the biggest numbskulls and doughheads I ever saw." The Sunday editor swore harshly and then said: "Hello, Bruce! Trying to learn something about the business?"

"No just looking around." Then Poston came over close to the Sunday editor, and said in a low voice, "Haven't you got something else to run in the place of that 'Bard of the Bakery?'"

"Yes I've got a heap of stuff—no end of it, in fact."

"Good!" and Poston's countenance lightened.

"But I'm not going to make any change in that lay-out to-night. That's the best story I've got in a local way. The city chaps fell down on me this week."

"Oh, you can just as well leave it out," pleaded Poston. "I don't think much of it—that is, for a story."

"That's just the way you fellows are. You write something that is read by three people—the editor, the proofreader and yourself—and you think it's great. Then when you write a really good thing you talk it down. No, I wouldn't leave out that story if you were to talk all night."

Poston's pride (and he was fuller of it than any policeman) got the better of him.

"Oh, I don't care," he said. You're the boss." Then he glanced regretfully at the form where the printers were framing Old Massey's picture with the cruel matter he had written about him, and went down stairs. He plunged into the "skate's" story and pencilled rapidly. "He'll never know he wrote this yarn," said Poston, puffing at a cigar and tossing the other man's manuscript into the basket.

This was Thursday night. The "magazine" would not go out to the world until Sunday morning, when the daily would be off the press for that day and the several sections of the great journal would be folded together.

On the afternoon of the next day Simsie came in with another string of verses. She entered the room confidently, and handed the manuscript to Poston.

"He was awful glad to get paid for those other pieces," she said. "It's the first money we ever made writin' for the papers.' He stayed up nearly all night last night writin' an' plannin', an' I know you'll like these new ones. They're the saddest he ever wrote. He said it was hard to write sad things when he felt so good about gettin' the poetry into the paper. But he knew you liked that kind best."

"Now, look here, Simsie," said Poston, with unwonted abruptness, for he had always spoken very kindly to her, "I don't want this stuff! I've had all I can stand of it!"

In a moment he was cursing himself inwardly. For Simsie's face showed how cruelly the blow had fallen. The suddenness of the awful words nearly took her feet from under her. She grasped wildly at the table for support. The room was going round very rapidly and there was a strange buzzing in her ears. She did not cry, but looked at him with an intensity of despair that caught at his heart and held it.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Simsie! I was just joking. I wanted to see how you'd take it—that's all!"

"Sure?" she asked with a gulp, her face brightening wonderfully.

"Sure! And I'll pay you now for this. The money will come from the office on Saturday to square up the other account."

"An' you want more, an' you'll print it? He's got his head full of i—deas, an' you know we haven't taken half o' the verses out o' that box yet."

"Yes, bring it in. But not before next Monday." He knew that the old man would see the Sunday paper before that time and would not trouble him any more. He gave Simsie two small, bright gold pieces, and she went away, treading air.

She took the money to the old man, who gloated over it as though it had been thousands.

"Now," said he, "I'll git to work on 'The Tired Carhorse.'"

"But you'd better eat something first, pop. Ye ain't eat nothin'to-day," said Simsie. Had she been old enough to observe how haggard the old man was and how much he needed good nourishment, she would have insisted upon his eating then and there. But for the poet there was naught but poetry. He was so full of inspiration that there was no necessity of thinking about other food.

He worked hard all the rest of the day, and ate only a scrap of bread before going to bed. On Saturday he walked up and down the back room and over the floor of the shop, with a fever of impatience burning within him. He could not write a line of verse. Not a single rhyme suggested itself to him, and as for a subject there was but one, and that was glory. The spur of fame had kept him at this writing work for years, and now his reward was about to come.

It became known in the neighborhood that Old Massey was going to blossom out in the full flower of fame in to-morrow's Herald. The neighbors all came in to see him and give him their rough congratulations, and they said to each other when they met in the shop.—

"I allus knew he had a nat'ral gift."

Which words pleased Old Massey more than anything, for he had proved his worth as a poet. If there were any cavilers, any envious men or women who had tried to belittle him as the tobacconist at the corner, who wrote couplets occasionally, they should all be quieted forever when they saw to-morrow's paper. Couplets? Why, he never wrote such common things as those. They should see.

He remained up all night that he might get the paper from the carrier's hands in the morning. He was very weary, but he knew it not. His feet were cold and there was a numbness in his knees. At times there were strange flutterings of his heart and his head throbbed violently. But out of all his ills there blazed one warming, inspiring thought, and it kept him up and took the place of sleep and rest.

When the lamp had burned itself out and the milk wagons had begun to rattle over the cobbles his legs grew more and more stiff and cold. He had to rub them with all the strength of his enfeebled arms to keep up a circulation of blood sufficient to enable him to stand erect.

He looked at Simsie's sleeping face proudly. How pleased she would be! He saw her start at times in her sleep and knew that she was dreaming of the printed poetry.

At last in the gray of the muggy morning he heard the whistle of the carrier. He had told him to whistle that he might know he was coming, and he had asked him to knock at the door in case he were asleep. But there was no need for knocking. He grasped the paper from the carrier's hands and gave him the 5 cents he had kept ready for this great occasion.

"Hold on," he said, as the man turned away with his bundle. "I'll need more than this one copy. Give me a dozen."

The carrier passed the papers over and took the money. He wished there were waiting poets on every corner.

Trembling with such jerkiness that he could hardly open the folded paper that he grasped from his pile as it lay on the little table in the back room, Massey fumbled with the leaves. Somehow his glasses would not sit upon his nose and had to be adjusted a score of times. His first grab and the eager search that followed it resulted in nothing more than a survey of a great mass of want advertisements. Next he blundered upon a row of headlines that told of battle, murder, sudden death and destruction. Then came a page devoted to a great wedding. He turned the leaves. Here were the editorials and then more news and advertisements.

A maze of streaky pinks and blues ran before his eyes. It was the color supplement, "The Sunday Magazine," and he glared at it uncertainly. Could his fame be wrapped up in these pinks and blues? "Society Women as Actresses" was the subject he read, and he turned over the sheet. Then he gave a great gasp and the paper shook in his clammy clutch. "The Bard of the Bakery," and his own face gazing solemnly forth from the page.

"Wal, that ain't so bad! An' look at the verses! But what's all this readin' matter about? Ah-ha! There's 'The Match Boy's Mother,' and here's 'Dyin', Dyin',' Lord, but it's great!"

He rubbed his hands and adjusted his glasses again.

"Hooray!" he shouted. "An' here's my favorite, 'The Ol' Man's Darlin'. That's Simsie. Hooray!"

He read a few of the lines. At the first the type seemed all to run together. Finally the blur cleared.

"They've got 'em all right, though the print's mighty fine. But this here readin' matter. Let's see: 'A new poet has been discovered in the Mission.' That's pretty good. 'He is known as the Bard of the Bakery. There have been Byrons in San Francisco and there have been Swinburnes, but nothing was known of any Homer; yet here is one who has drunk the true, the blushful Hippocrene.' What does that mean? Well, it's mighty high-soundin' and it's a way-up send-off—a reg'lar puff!"

He read on down the column, slowly and laboriously. At the top of the column he had been all smiles, but as he read his brow began to take on a puzzled look. Then he looked up very thoughtfully. Under the "Match Boy's Mother" was the comment:

"Is not here a source of infinite delight?"

"Infinite delight, infinite delight!" he repeated. "Delight about what? This is a very sad piece. He isn't joshin' me, is he?"

He read on to where at the bottom of the first column the sarcasm grew thinner, and at the top of the next column, just above his portrait, he caught the phrase, "juggling with hexameters," and a little further along, "scooping out verse by the shovelful," "song foundry," and "immortal lyrics while you wait." Then came the prefatory comment on "Dying, Dying," in which appeared the words: "Out of this deoxygenated doughnutry has come the following, which anybody can see, without reading twice, is far greater poetry than any railroad time-table ever hung up in the Oakland ferry waiting room." And from that on to the end of the article there were spear-points, stocks and the rack.

The old man began to moan low over his table, and his head sunk and sunk as he read on. The cobra sting at the end felled him. It read:

"And if any of the lion-hunters wish to see this old verse founder making poetry, all that they have to do is to go out on Mission street to the number mentioned in the foregoing paragraph and see him at his immortal work. He will reel you off one of his precious absurdities while you revel in the sight of sugared sinkers, palate-inviting fluffies and caraway cakes. If you don't happen to fancy the awful rhymes you will soon ascertain that you are not one of the discerning. The ancient poet will tell you he knows it's good poetry, for he wrote it himself.

Massey's head fell upon the bony arms that rested on the table. The candle burned itself out, but he did not move.

Simsie was awakened by the knock of the man with the bread. She ran past her father and received a dozen loaves, which she laid upon the counter.

"Why, pop!" she cried, "you didn't go to bed a' tall. An' you went to sleep out here. Oh, the paper! That's so. Is it in? Let's see!"

Massey's arms held the sheet down, but they did not cover it.

"My, but that's a good picture o' pop! Ain't it though for all the world? An' there's the pieces. It must 'a made him awful happy." She touched his shoulder gently. "Pop, wake up an' go to bed now. You mus' be nearly wore out. Sat up all night; poor old pop! But he can't sleep good there. Come, pop; git up." She shook his shoulder, her fingers grasping the rusty old coat. "Pop, pop! You got to git to bed. D'you hear me, pop?"

An early customer came in for a loaf of bread.

"Help me to wake pop, Mis' Wiggin. I can't git him to bed.

The woman looked at the old man a moment, then she touched his hand and drew back in alarm.

"Why, he ain't breathin' an' he's cold as a stun! He's dead, that's what he is! Oh, Simsie!"

Poston took complete charge of the funeral and dressed Simsie suitably for it. In the carriage coming back from the cemetery she said:

"I'm glad he died happy, any way. That was a splendid piece you printed about him. There was some things I didn't quite understand, an' what did you say 'precious absurdities' for?"

"Oh, the printers got it wrong. I say, Simsie, will you do me a favor?"

"I'd do anything for you—you've been so good, promisin' to take care o' me, an' all."

"Will you burn up all the copies you've got of the Herald with that poetry in? I mean, all the copies you've got—every one, and not keep any?" He urged the request so insistently that she could not help saying "Yes," though she wanted to keep the printed verses for her father's sake. "You wouldn't like them when you grow up," he said. "That is, they would seem different to you, you know, and then you've got all the written copies you want."

They were silent for awhile. Simsie was thinking of the strangeness of the request her friend had made, and Poston was thinking of something else, which finally developed into the question:

"Now, Simsie, what school would you rather go to—the Horace Mann or the Mission Grammar?"

"Oh, the Mission Grammar! It's nearer to the bakery."

"But you're not going to live there any more. You're going to stay with Mrs. Wiggin."

"Yes, but I'd like to be near the old place on account o' pop."

The girl sighed and looked out of the carriage window through wet eyelids.

Great and Small.

The highest hills
Are wrinkles in time's transitory dust;
The tiniest rills
Are seas at birth that mold the earth's huge crust;
There is nor great nor small—our fumbling eyes
Confuse the essence with mere shape and size.
—Richard Burton.